

Calling all farmers and ranchers across the 23rd District of Texas: lend us a hand! Your response by February 4th to the 2007 Census of Agriculture from the National Agricultural Statistics Service is crucial to the future of farming and ranching in your community and across the United States. Critical information is collected through the Census of Agriculture every 5 years and every participating farmer and rancher has the chance to make his or her mark on the agricultural industry in America.

Did you know that the Census of Agriculture provides the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every county in the nation? Through the Census, producers can show the nation the value and importance of agriculture and they can help influence decisions that will shape the future of American agriculture for years to come. Census of Agriculture data is used by all those who serve farmers and rural communities - federal, state and local governments, agribusinesses, trade associations and many others.

It is critical that the information collected is accurate so officials can serve their communities with programs tailored to the region's specific needs. The answers to the Census questions provide Congress with the tools they need to determine whether the effective agricultural programs to offer their constituents. Legislators and local authorities often rely on past census data to target important services to rural areas, and the USDA uses the information to prioritize staffing at local service centers. Many farmers and ranchers also use the data to make informed decisions about the future of their own businesses. Filling out this questionnaire puts every American farmer on the map for agricultural data and agricultural assistance programs, and ensures that they are accurately represented when decisions are being made regarding agriculture resources and policies.

Complete your 2007 Census of Agriculture today. This year, for the first time, you can even complete the survey online at www.agcensus.nass.usda.gov. I encourage everyone who received the 2007 Census of Agriculture to complete it accurately and reply by February 4, 2008. A response is mandatory from every farmer or rancher who produces or sells \$1000 of agricultural products, regardless of size of type of operation.

As always, my office is available to assist farmers and constituents across the 23rd District of Texas with any questions about the 2007 Census of Agriculture as well as assistance we can provide with Social Security, Veterans benefits, or any other matter regarding a Federal agency. Call us toll-free on the constituent services hotline at 1-866-915-3493 or find out more about what my office can do for you online at <http://rodriguez.house.gov>.

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